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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Part 665

RIN 0648-XG925

**Pacific Island Pelagic Fisheries; 2019 U.S. Territorial
Longline Bigeye Tuna Catch Limits for the Commonwealth of
the Northern Mariana Islands**

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of a valid specified fishing agreement.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces a valid specified fishing agreement that allocates up to 1,000 metric tons (t) of the 2019 bigeye tuna limit for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) to U.S. longline fishing vessels. The agreement supports the long-term sustainability of fishery resources of the U.S. Pacific Islands, and fisheries development in the CNMI.

DATES: The specified fishing agreement is valid on July 19, 2019.

ADDRESSES: The Fishery Ecosystem Plan for Pelagic Fisheries of the Western Pacific (Pelagic FEP) describes specified fishing agreements and is available from the Western

Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council), 1164 Bishop St., Suite 1400, Honolulu, HI 96813, tel 808-522-8220, fax 808-522-8226, or <http://www.wpcouncil.org>.

NMFS prepared environmental analyses that describe the potential impacts on the human environment that would result from the action. The analyses, identified by NOAA-NMFS-2019-0028, are available from

<https://www.regulations.gov/docket?D=NOAA-NMFS-2019-0028>,

or from Michael D. Tosatto, Regional Administrator, NMFS Pacific Islands Region (PIR), 1845 Wasp Blvd., Bldg. 176, Honolulu, HI 96818.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Rebecca Walker, NMFS PIRO Sustainable Fisheries, 808-725-5184.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a final rule published on July 18, 2019, NMFS specified a 2019 limit of 2,000 t of longline-caught bigeye tuna for the U.S. Pacific Island territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the CNMI (84 FR 34321). NMFS allows each territory to allocate up to 1,000 t of the 2,000 t limit to U.S. longline fishing vessels identified in a valid specified fishing agreement.

On July 18, 2019, NMFS received from the Council a specified fishing agreement between the CNMI and the Hawaii Longline Association (HLA). The Council's Executive Director advised that the specified fishing agreement was

consistent with the criteria set forth in 50 CFR 665.819(c) (1). On July 19, 2019, NMFS reviewed the agreement and determined that it is consistent with the Pelagic FEP, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, implementing regulations, and other applicable laws.

In accordance with 50 CFR 300.224(d) and 50 CFR 665.819(c) (9), vessels in the agreement may retain and land bigeye tuna in the western and central Pacific Ocean under the CNMI attribution limit. On July 20, 2019, NMFS began attributing bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement to the CNMI. If NMFS determines that the fishery will reach the 1,000 t allocation limit, we will restrict the retention of bigeye tuna caught by vessels in the agreement, unless the vessels are included in a subsequent specified fishing agreement with another U.S. territory.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: July 29, 2019.

Alan D. Risenhoover,
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries,
National Marine Fisheries Service.

